United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1565
20 January 1994

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, in address to International Court of Justice in The Hague, says many disputes could be settled through reliance on Court and on international law.

+ General Assembly President begins 10-day official visit to Italy, Switzerland and Zimbabwe; to launch Olympic Games Truce in Lausanne on Monday.

+ Security Council President, in letter to Secretary-General, warns that delays in implementing Cotonou Peace Agreement could endanger support for United Nations efforts in Liberia.

+ Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cyprus to visit Nicosia, Athens and Ankara from 22 to 29 January; to hold talks on package of confidence-building measures for Varosha/Nicosia International Airport

+ UNHCR says tens of thousands of Bosnian civilians are not receiving humanitarian aid despite assurances of access by warring parties; more are at risk because of bureaucratic and military obstacles, continued fighting, winter weather and deteriorating roads.

+ WHO report says one third of world's children under five are malnourished and underweight; stresses importance of breast-feeding, linking economic development and nutritional well-being.

* * *

Continuing his stay in the Netherlands, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today paid his first visit to the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. He said in an address that he would do everything he could to promote the role of the Court and of international law, noting that many international disputes could be settled through them. He also recalled that his report "An Agenda for Peace" had stressed that greater reliance on the Court would be an important contribution to United Nations peace-keeping.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

Also today, the Secretary-General attended a meeting with Parliamentarians for Global Action at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was due to meet this evening with Ramon Escovar-Salon, Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for War Crimes in the former Yugoslavia, and to attend an official dinner offered in his honour by Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General told a joint meeting of the Standing Committees for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Cooperation of the Dutch Parliament that the promotion of democracy and human rights was a crucial mainstay of international peace and security. He also met with the Secretary-General of the Western European Union (WEU), Willem van Eekelen, and discussed cooperation between the United Nations and the WEU. He later attended a working dinner hosted by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Ruud Lubbers, during which he thanked the Dutch Government for its important contribution to peace-keeping operations.

* * *

The President of the General Assembly, S.R. Insanally (Guyana), left New York yesterday for a 10-day official visit to Italy, Switzerland and Zimbabwe. He was to be received in Rome today by Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, and would then meet with Foreign Minister Beniamino Andreatta. Tomorrow, Mr. Insanally will be received at the Vatican, where he will meet with Pope John Paul II.

On Saturday, the Assembly President will leave for Lausanne, Switzerland, where he will launch the Olympic Truce for next month's Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway, at a special ceremony on Monday. Observance of the Truce, which calls for a universal halt to hostilities seven days before the start of the Olympic Games and ends on the seventh day after the close of the Games, was called for by the General Assembly last October. Mr. Insanally yesterday appealed to all States to observe the Truce, and to strive for lasting peace whether or not they were parties to a confrontation.

* * *

Delays in implementing the Cotonou Peace Agreement could endanger international support for United Nations efforts in Liberia, according to the President of the Security Council. In a letter to the Secretary-General dated 18 January, he said Council members were concerned that the transitional government had not yet been installed, disarmament had not begun, and efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance to all parts of the country had met with difficulties.

The Council President welcomed the report of the Secretary-General's Special Representative that the deployment of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) was almost complete. However, he warned that continued support for UNOMIL would depend on full and prompt implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. Council members shared the Secretary-General's expectation that elections should take place during the first half of this

(more)

year. They also hoped that enough progress would be made in the peace process that the Secretary-General could recommend a precise timetable for the elections when he submitted his next report on the situation before 16 February.

* * *

The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cyprus, Joe Clark, is to visit Nicosia, Athens and Ankara from 22 to 29 January, a United Nations spokesman said today. In letters last month to the leaders of the two Cypriot communities and the Prime Ministers of Greece and Turkey, the Secretary-General indicated that Mr. Clark had been asked to return to the region for talks on the Varosha/Nicosia International Airport package of confidence-building measures.

In his letters, dated 17 December, the Secretary-General also expressed the view that it should be possible for the leaders of the two communities to accept in principle the package on the understanding that its provisions would be fully implemented. Expert teams had shown that the package was practicable and would confer important proportionate benefits on both sides, and the Secretary-General remained strongly of that view, according to the spokesman. Acceptance in principle of the package was necessary so that Mr. Clark would be in a position to discuss its implementation during his visit.

* * *

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Sadako Ogata has expressed fears for tens of thousands of civilians deprived of humanitarian aid in Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite assurances of access from all sides there. Mrs. Ogata said the UNHCR-led humanitarian aid effort in the country was keeping hundreds of thousands of people alive this winter, despite numerous obstructions by the warring parties. Only a combination of mild weather, persistence by aid workers and the determination of the almost three million people at risk had prevented a catastrophe. She warned, however, that the weather could worsen at any time.

Bosnia and Herzegovina needed some 47,000 metric tons of food aid last month, but received less than 20,000, according to the UNHCR. In some areas of central and eastern Bosnia, less than 20 per cent of requirements were met. The low delivery rate was a result of bureaucratic and military obstacles created by the warring sides, continued fighting, winter weather and deteriorating roads. Just two months ago, leaders of all three sides pledged that they would ensure humanitarian access to all in need.

* * *

Around one third of the world's children under five years of age -- some 192 million in all -- are malnourished and underweight, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Nevertheless, there has been a worldwide decrease since 1975 in protein malnutrition, except in Africa where the number of malnourished children has increased due to population growth. Those

(more)

observations are made in a report summarizing the global situation of malnutrition among children under five years of age, to be discussed by WHO's Executive Board at its current session in Geneva.

The report reviews the situation concerning iodine, vitamin A and iron, which are all vital to human health. It stresses the importance of breast-feeding, noting that infants who are artificially fed are at greater risk than infants who are breast-fed. A proper diet is more crucial in infancy than at any other stage because of the infant's high nutritional needs in relation to body weight, and the influence of early nutrition on future health and development. Nutritional well-being is a pre-condition for the development of societies, and Governments will be unable to accelerate long-term economic development until optimal child growth and development are ensured for the majority, the report concludes.

* *** *